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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NICOSIA 000887

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH CYPRIOT PROTEST VOTE SEEKS PARTY TO SUPPORT

REF: A. NICOSIA 799

[1](#)B. NICOSIA 497

[1](#)C. NICOSIA 674

Classified By: AMB. RONALD L. SCHLICHER FOR REASONS 1.4(b) AND 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: New Turkish Cypriot (T/C) political parties have begun to emerge in response to growing voter frustration with traditional offerings. On the right, the Freedom and Reform Party (OP) -- which formed one year ago, allegedly with Ankara's aid -- is trying to re-brand itself as a modern center-right alternative. Competition for conservative voters also comes from the "Politics for the People" (HIS) movement, a vehicle to further the distinctly secular ambitions of the former "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)" mufti, Ahmet Yonluer. Yonluer, distrusted by the native T/C community, aims to overcome this handicap by directing his message at mainland Turkish settlers. The surprise November 5 resignation of lead T/C negotiator Rasit Pertev (SEPTEL) and his announcement to form a new, purportedly center-right, liberal democratic party may provide another--more palatable compared with Yonluer or Avci--choice for conservative T/C voters. On the left, the Communal Democracy Party (TDP), a union of two pro-solution parties, wants to peel voters from the ideologically similar, "governing" Republican Turkish Party (CTP). With nationalist tendencies rising across the political spectrum, selling a moderate, pro-solution platform looks difficult, however. In general, while conditions would seem ripe for new Turkish Cypriot parties to form and win backing, efforts to date are still in their infancy and face serious challenges. End Summary

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OP: We are here to stay!  
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[1](#)2. (C) OP formed in September 2006 when a handful of opposition National Action Party (UBP) and then-coalition partner Democrat Party (DP) "MPs" defected and were rewarded with three "ministerial" portfolios in the majority-CTP "government." Many T/Cs consider the party bereft of ideological definition and a mere creation of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and/or CTP. OP's shaky start was rocked even further by the June 4 forced resignation of the "Minister of Economics and Tourism", allegedly for using his office to pad party coffers (Ref B). Since, it has battled continual accusations of corruption in the ranks. OP leader and "TRNC Foreign Minister" Turgay Avci has been working overtime to bolster OP's image, however, through foreign visits, flashy party events, and a new, embargo-busting ferry service to Syria he engineered (Ref A). Anecdotaly, the campaign seems to be working.

13. (C) OP does little to hide its admiration of AKP. OP "MP" Mustafa Gokmen told Embassy officers on October 10 that the party was following a big tent, "AKP model" that targeted the widest possible voter spectrum, but especially the political right. (Note: OP,s party symbol of an individual with leaves blossoming from outstretched arms strongly resembles AKP,s light-bulb party symbol. End Note) Mehmet Pars, Kyrenia District OP chairman and former member of both UBP and DP, boasted recently that Avci and Turkish PM Erdogan are "new leaders." Ideologically, party goals are largely a rehash of Atatürkist rhetoric and support for "TRNC statehood," despite Gokmen,s insistence that economic issues will dominate the next election, not the Cyprus Problem.

14. (C) Regardless of continuing criticism, the party has registered some success in winning new members and enticing DP and UBP activists into its ranks. On October 15, Kivanc Buhar, the independent mayor of Gecitkale, joined OP in a noisy ceremony attended by Avci and two other OP "ministers."

At least one former DP member of the Famagusta City Council has defected to OP, as well as a handful of mayors and city council members in other towns. Competing parties have started to perceive an OP rise. Oktay Kayalp, the long-serving CTP mayor of Famagusta, told us that OP would out-poll DP if elections were held in early November. UBP,s Dervis Eroglu, a former "TRNC Prime Minister," complained that OP was stealing party votes, but noted that DP faced even greater losses.

15. (C) A self-professed center-right party, OP,s natural inclination on the Cyprus question is two state-oriented, and its official party goals call for the continuation of the "TRNC." "MP" Gokmen has admitted to us that he favors a two-state outcome, possibly as a loose confederation. Publicly, however, the party toes the "government" line in

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favor of a bizonal, bicomunal federal solution for Cyprus. CTP contacts such as "Public Works and Transport Minister" Salih Usar joke that OP has to be "warned" from time to time in its pro-partition sentiments.

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HIS: Politics for the People (Especially Those from Turkey)  
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16. (C) Former Mufti Ahmet Yonluer, who resigned his post on August 24 under a cloud of controversy (Ref C), has declared himself a defender of Turkish settlers with his "Politics for the People" (HIS) movement. He told us that Turkish settlers were "second-class citizens" in the north; if T/Cs could not make peace within their own community, how could they make peace with the Greek Cypriots? Although known for a moderate attitude towards G/Cs, he voiced no plan -- or even coherent thoughts -- to us on the Cyprus Question.

17. (C) Mainstream T/C politicians despise Yonluer for his scandalous behavior, while the "Deep State" dislikes his self-promoted close ties to Turkish PM Erdogan. Deputy Nicosia Mayor Cemal Cin (UBP) dismissed him as a "garbage man" at a recent Iftar dinner, while ultra-nationalist daily "Volkan" has tried to link Yonluer with Embassy officials in an apparent attempt to discredit him among the more nationalist Turkish settlers he hopes to reach. DP head Serdar Denktash told us that Yonluer is actually trolling for votes for OP and Avci, and will later join him. (Comment: Interestingly, Avci also uses the "Politics for the People" phrase in his public remarks, and Yonluer allegedly has helped convince DP and UBP deputies to join OP. Publicly, however, the ex-mufti is highly critical of Avci's party. End Comment)

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Rasit Pertev: Mainstream Conservative Voice?  
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¶8. (C) The surprise November 5 resignation of lead T/C negotiator Rasit Pertev (Septel) may provide yet another, more palatable conservative choice. At a news conference on the day of his resignation, Pertev announced that he would form a new party after denying rumors to that effect on October 31. Journalist Huseyin Ekmekci told the Embassy that most likely the new formation would be "liberal democratic." Former DP "Economics Minister" Dervis Deniz told us on November 1 that there was a need in the "TRNC" for a pro-solution, free market centre-right party. He hoped, however, that Serdar Denktas and his own DP would embrace a pro-solution stance and fill that gap.

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TDP: Pro-solution Leftist Alternative  
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¶9. (U) Mehmet Cakici and his Social Democrat-associated TDP aim to win back leftist voters who defected to CTP in the 2005 "parliamentary" elections. TDP, founded in summer 2007, is a union of two standard-bearers of the pro-solution T/C left: the Peace and Democracy Movement (BDH) and the Communal Liberation Party (TKP). BDH, with TKP support, won 13 percent of the vote in 2003; in 2005 elections, however, each party contested elections independently. BDH squeaked over the five percent threshold and sent a sole "MP" to "Parliament" in 2005, but TKP corralled only three percent and was left out of the "legislature."

¶10. (C) Now, however, Cakici plans to position himself to the left of CTP by hammering "President" Talat and the "governing" party for cozying up to Turkey and for what Cakici believes is Talat's increasing nationalism. He told us recently that he will demand more "sovereignty" from Turkey, such as control over appointment of the "Central Bank" governor and T/C security forces. He has begun to criticize Talat publicly for "changing" and abandoning his goals of a bizonal, bicomunal Cyprus in favor of two states (official TDP policy calls for a bizonal, bicomunal federal Cypriot republic.)

¶11. (C) Cakici deplores the growing wave of nationalism in the north, cognizant it complicates the task of building a new, left-wing party. Long-time "MP" Akinci told Poloff that "the coming of a new leader (Cakici) is not enough to build the party." Regarding criticism of Turkey, Cakici himself realizes that he must toe a careful line. He revealed, for example, that he was leery of seeking support from Izzet Izcan, a former BDH deputy and head of the more radical pro-solution United Turkey Party (BKP), since many perceived

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Izcan as the "TRNC branch of (Greek Cypriot Communist Party) AKEL."

Comment:

¶12. (C) Political conditions in the "TRNC" would seem to favor the rise of a new, centrist party capable of appealing to those on the center-right and the center-left, since the ruling CTP appears to have botched the economy and public sector reform, while main opposition UBP and DP cannot move beyond a political rhetoric that panders to the painful, Cyprus Problem-related memories of those over fifty. Pertev's surprise announcement bears watching, and he has an excellent pedigree. He may even try to rally the handful of pro-solution UBP and DP deputies to his cause. That said, T/C voters, like scotch drinkers, prefer an aged product, and the market does not welcome newcomers. Of the remaining three new political groupings, OP would seem to have the best shot, but may never be able to put its questionable birth behind it in the minds of voters. Should CTP dump OP in favor of DP as its junior partner -- a recurring rumor -- OP, deprived of the resources of office, would be hard-pressed to grow further, barring serious outside support. Dark-horse Yonluer seems to be getting darker all the time, and at

present does not appear a serious threat. TDP will succeed in winning back some votes it lost to CTP in 2005, but is unlikely to move much beyond its pro-solution, leftist, and seemingly dwindling base. End Comment.  
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